

Warning! Watch your telephone bill closely this month for another example of corporate thievery if you are involved with AT&T. I have never signed up for any "package deals" as I don't make many long distance phone calls, so I just have my basic service with AT&T from way before all the deregulation.. When I do call long distance I dial one of the cheaper access codes and talk for 3 cents a minute. I noticed this month's bill was higher than usual and read the fine print. Tacked onto my March bill is \$3.39 for a Monthly Usage Minimum Amount. Imagine, I didn't call as often as they wanted me to, so they FINED me. I cannot get over the unmitigated gall of Corporate America. Like I OWE them a certain amount each month just because I exist. I called their 800 number and after much transferring finally spoke to a live person. She informed me that their basic plan had changed as of March and that they sent postcards to people informing them of this change. "Isn't that special" to quote the church lady: "We at AT&T are not bringing in enough money to satisfy our stock holders bottom line, so we are just going to add a little something to your monthly utility bill. It's less than \$4 a month, it won't hurt much, and you may not even notice." They tried this once before several years back. I noticed then and called to complain. They dropped the charge then and they will drop the charge now, but not if you don't call and complain. Deregulation might have served some purpose in breaking up the telephone monopoly and allowing more competition when it was first initiated, but these new communications companies are now way out of control as to the different taxes and fees they can impose, the confusion between local and long distance services they offer, and all the different "plans." Who can understand it all. We need an ad hoc citizens committee, that is capable of documenting all the communications choices, moving past all the hype, and laying out exactly what our choices are and what they cost. The only company greedier than the phone companies, is the local cable company. Oh, wait, wasn't AT&T involved with them not too long ago? Imagine that!

Susan Childress
Michigan City, IN 46360